

CLARKE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS	
February 25, 2004	Budget Work Session
	General District Courtroom
	7:00 p.m.

At a Board of Supervisors Work Session held on Wednesday, February 25, 2004 at 7:00 pm in the General District Courtroom of the General District Courthouse, Berryville, Virginia.

Present

Chairman Staelin, Vice Chairman Hobert, Supervisor Dunning, Supervisor Byrd, Supervisor Weiss

Also Present

Tom Judge, David L. Ash, William Houck, Bent Ferrell, Gary Hornbaker, Caren Leach, Michael McCall, Eleanor Smalley, Matthew Eberhardt, Ed Breslauer, Michael Graff and other citizens and members of the press

Call To Order

Chairman Staelin called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm in the General District Courtroom of the General District Courthouse. School Board Chairman William Houck called the School Board meeting to order shortly thereafter.

Meeting Overview

Dr. Houck provided a brief overview of the project. Chairman Staelin stated that there would be no decision made by the Board of Supervisors regarding the school facilities construction plan explaining that this was the first time some members of the Board of Supervisors had seen this information. Chairman Staelin put forth that the Board would be meeting over the next few weeks and would review the plan further at these meetings. He emphasized that this would be the largest expenditure in the history of the County and would require more time for review than this meeting would allow.

Bent Ferrell, School Board Vice Chair, provided an overview of the presentation stating that one of their goals for the meeting was to present their efforts and start dialogue. He introduced Doug Westmoreland, Moseley Architects.

Moseley Architects Presentation of Options

Doug Westmoreland provided a slide presentation of the various options Moseley Architects had proposed for consideration by the School Board. Mr. Westmoreland pointed out that his firm had been hired to perform a building feasibility study not to design the building. He explained how they had formulated space allocations. He opined that a school couldn't be programmed to be 100% efficient for some classrooms will not be used every period of each day.

Mr. Westmoreland reviewed changes in the plans necessitated by the \$25MM spending cap stating that no educational space had been removed. Some changes noted were the use of the existing gym, use of the existing wrestling room, reduction of square footage from the field house, reduction in athletic fields, a rubber floor in the gym instead of wood, no bleachers in the gym and temporary seating in the auditorium. Other reductions include furniture and equipment, teacher workspace planning areas, and square footage in the cafeteria, and student commons area.

For the elementary conversion of the existing high school, the educational areas must be renovated. Also included in the renovation is the replacement of the HVAC in the core area.

Mr. Westmoreland stated that they had revisited the idea of renovating the high school for continued use as a high school. He expressed his opinion that expanding the current high school was difficult. He reported that the high school renovation plans drawn up by Barbara J. Byrd had been reviewed but that Moseley had determined this design would leave inadequacies in the core areas.

Next Steps

Bent Ferrell reviewed existing buildings and the capacity for them to be expanded in the future. He based his assumptions on enrollment projections for the year 2010. The findings indicate that a new high school would be under capacity; the middle school will be at capacity; the elementary schools will be under capacity. Using these projections, the next possible action would be the expansion of Johnson Williams Middle School, which was designed for expansion. Also, the School Board would prefer that the elementary schools not be over 400 students, which could result in changes at D.G. Cooley Elementary School, which would be the oldest by 2010.

Discussion of School Facilities Construction Plans

Chairman Staelin thanked Mr. Westmoreland stating that some of his questions had been answered during his presentation. Mr. Staelin posed questions regarding the auditorium lighting and capacity. Mr. Westmoreland stated that at this point the plan does not call for theatrical lighting or dimming capability but it was upgradeable. He explained that some schools design auditorium space to seat half of the student body; however, with this project, the size was community driven.

Questions were raised regarding the use of temporary seating in the auditorium, which has a sloped floor. Supervisor's Byrd, Staelin, Weiss and Dunning expressed concern regarding the feasibility of this plan. Questions were raised regarding the rubber flooring in the new gym and the lack of bleachers. In response, Dr. Houck stated that this was a conceptual plan; and the School Board is willing to work with the plan.

Questions were raised regarding the continued use of space for high school students after converting the facility to an elementary school. Some issues raised related to the mixture of age groups, the loss of space for elementary education, and where the play areas would be placed for elementary use.

Questions were raised regarding the Vo/Ag areas of the school, which show no expansion. Questions were also raised regarding the busing of Vo/Ag students and the time they will lose in transit. Both Dr. Houck and Bent Ferrell stated that this arrangement is not ideal. Dr. Houck opined that \$25MM is not enough to do what the School Board wants to do and they will try to raise money to cover the shortfall.

Questions were raised regarding the escalating prices of materials. Doug Westmoreland assured the Board of Supervisors that inflation had been factored into the cost of construction.

Questions were raised regarding the lack of a site for new school construction. Chairman Staelin stated that the lack of a site impacted the schedule, which calls for schematics in May. Doug Westmoreland put forth that a contractor normally needs eight months to develop a design but they might be able to compress the schedule by two months.

All members of the Board of Supervisors expressed concern regarding the lack of a building site for new school construction. Chairman Staelin stated that site selection is critical to the cost of the project. Without a site, they cannot adequately estimate the cost of land or off-site improvements. He suggested that the School Board contact the Town of Berryville to review its requirements for utilities. There was some discussion regarding the time needed for

Planning or Zoning issues that require public hearing. Tom Judge stated that to start the bond issue by October action must occur by July.

Vice Chairman Hobert queried the School Board if they were prepared to discuss renovation of both schools or deferring the project until a site was found. Dr. Houck stated that he did not think the high school should be renovated and opined that the matter should go to referendum. Mr. Hobert countered that a referendum does not refer to the purchase land. Dr. Houck argued that it was the \$25MM that limited the School Boards ability to purchase land. Supervisor Weiss noted that it is County's Comprehensive Plan that is the limiting factor for school site selection.

Gary Hornbaker stated that the School Board was prepared to explore all options. He expressed concern that they would be unable to purchase land if the plan was not approved.

Caren Leach stated that she was prepared to make the best of the situation. She opined that if \$25MM was the best they could do then they would try to compromise and make do with that amount.

Bent Ferrell opined that he did not wish to do the construction half way. He stated that he would prefer to wait to do the project right. He expressed his belief that if everyone worked together and they could do the project for \$25MM, which would be in the best interest of the community.

Mike McCall stated that the Joint Committee on School Construction has shown that the \$25MM project is doable. He expressed his agreement with Bent Ferrell, if necessary, to defer and build the school right. He opined that he was not yet prepared to defer.

Supervisor Dunning expressed his concern that the School Board does not consider the facility as educationally sound for high school students but is willing to place more sensitive children in this same building. He said that he was concerned about the plans for the elementary children. Supervisor Dunning reminded the School Board that they would not allow co-mingling of middle school and high school students but were willing now to put elementary with high school students. Mike McCall stated that the high school students would use the athletic facilities after school. Mr. Westmoreland argued that the elementary students do not require as much outside space. Doug Westmoreland stated that the rooms will be made larger for elementary use, skylights will be added to the core, it will be painted, ceiling tiles will be new, and \$1.5MM is enough to cover a sprinkler and fire alarm system. Bent Ferrell stated that they would not redo the driveway and only the HVAC in the core will be replaced.

Supervisor Byrd asked the School Board if they had considered using land at the Clarke County Park. Mr. Westmoreland stated that he had discussed this option for it was land they would not have to purchase. Chairman Staelin stated that there are 20 acres available in the Park, which are not on the Park's master plan. Supervisor Dunning stated that all would support sharing the Park for athletics, which would reduce cost of land purchase. It was suggested that the School Board contact the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to ascertain their level of support.

Questions were raised regarding the design of the loop road. Security concerns were put forth, which Mr. Ferrell said were being addressed.

David Weiss assured the School Board that the questions asked by the Board of Supervisors did not mean they are against school construction. However, there are many questions that require answers. He requested that the School Board provide the Board of Supervisors the list projects for which private money is being raised. Bent Ferrell agreed to provide the list to the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Weiss stated that the reduction in the dollar amount has caused people to wonder what has been cut or shorted. Chairman Staelin stated that his Board was trying to establish a comfort level with the estimates.

Supervisor Dunning described his recent tour of the renovated high school in Strasburg. He stated that the administrators were very proud of their renovated school. This renovation

added 60,000 square feet to Strasburg High School and the construction was done while school was in session. He told the Boards that Shenandoah County had renovated three high schools at one time for \$10MM each. Mr. Dunning opined that not enough attention was paid to the renovation option. He noted that it will be difficult to keep to the 5% spending escalator and expressed concern regarding the affect on teacher salaries and the entire County if the model estimates are not met. Supervisor Dunning urged the School Board to look again at renovation options.

There followed discussion of student teacher ratios, class sizes and international baccalaureate enrollment. Supervisor Byrd put forth that if the class sizes vary then the smaller existing classrooms would still be viable for smaller classes.

Dr. Houck argued that every group that has studied the schools has recommended that a new high school be built with the exception of the Board of Supervisors. Chairman Staelin stated the Joint Committee on School Construction had not voted on whether to build a new high school or not. Their function was to determine how much the County could afford for the expansion of school capacity. Mr. Staelin expressed concern because he sensed the School Board did not strongly support the new High School they are proposing. He wanted to make sure it would meet their educational needs. He emphasized that the Supervisors do not want to force anyone into something they don't want; however, he could see benefits of renovation. Vice Chairman Hobert expressed agreement with John Staelin noting that part of the challenge is that they are dealing with the expansion of two schools simultaneously.

Doug Westmoreland stated that Moseley Architects has considerable expertise in designing schools with more than 30% of contracts in Virginia. They also work with school systems in neighboring states. He noted that comments from the Board of Supervisors were not unusual. He cited reasons why Moseley believed that conversion of the high school for elementary use was the best option and put forth Moseley's reputation for consideration.

Supervisor Weiss stated that he wished to remain positive. He emphatically stated \$25MM was not a miserly amount and comments to the contrary were disturbing. He opined that to stay within the budget would take outstanding effort and luck. He expressed concern regarding the tremendous amount of money the School Board intends to raise through private funds. Supervisor Dunning stated that expenses have not stayed within 4 to 5% for many years. He noted that the schools take 70% of the County's budget and 80% of that in salaries. He noted that the County is already behind in the first year due to increases in health insurance and retirement. Dr. Houck, in response to queries as to the School Board's ability to stay within the 5%, stated that it would be difficult.

Dr. Houck opined that he felt that the Board of Supervisors was adding conditions and that having a site was not in their agreement. Chairman Staelin stated that, while the Board of Supervisors did not expect the School Board to have everything done at the time they presented their plan, the ability to determine a reasonable plan without a site selected is impossible. Mr. Staelin stated that the acceptance of the plan is contingent upon the ability to find a suitable site, as well as the cost of the land. Further, when a suitable site is selected, the cost of site improvements must be also be determined. He assured the School Board that the Board of Supervisors was committed to funding school construction but there are still too many questions for a decision to be made at this time.

Summary of Required Actions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1.	Contact Parks and Recreation Advisory Board regarding land use at the County Park.	School Board
2.	Provide Board of Supervisors with a list of projects to be privately funded.	School Board
3.	Contact Town of Berryville regarding utility cost estimates.	School Board

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
4.	Contact Planning Departments of Town of Berryville and Clarke County to determine time frame for public hearings.	School Board
5.	Submit questions and concerns to the School Board.	Board of Supervisors

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Staelin adjourned the meeting at 9:24 pm.

Next Meeting Date:

The next Board of Supervisors Work Session is set for February 26, 2004, at 5:00 pm in the Board of Supervisor's Meeting Room, Second Floor of the Circuit Courthouse, 102 N. Church Street, Berryville, Virginia.

ATTEST: February 25, 2004

John Staelin, Chairman

David L. Ash, County Administrator